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Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation

JOURNEY STRENGTHENS RELATIONSHIPS WITH ABORIGINAL YOUTH

VANCOUVER – The Province is providing a total of $30,000 to the Pulling Together Canoe Society and Ride With The Tides Productions to strengthen relationships between police, Aboriginal youth and communities and to increase awareness about First Nations cultures, Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation Minister Michael de Jong announced today.

Minister de Jong joined 15 canoes with police officers and Aboriginal youth paddlers for a brief portion of their day's journey, ending with a landing ashore at the Musqueam First Nation. The paddlers were welcomed by a Musqueam Elder and community members with traditional drumming and dancing, followed by a feast.

"Aboriginal people have a splendid long history of canoe travel down the mighty Fraser," said de Jong. "By funding educational initiatives like the Pulling Together canoe tour, and the documentary commemorating the voyage, we are taking important steps to champion Aboriginal culture and to celebrate it under the New Relationship."

The 2008 Pulling Together canoe journey is an eight-day canoe tour that travels from Hope to Gibsons. Aboriginal youth and police officers paddle together, visiting First Nations communities along the Fraser River and sharing traditional First Nations foods and stories. Approximately 150 people from Aboriginal groups, RCMP, the Abbotsford, Vancouver, West Vancouver, New Westminster, Delta, and Oak Bay police departments are involved. Pulling Together began in 2001.

"It is an incredible thing to witness the positive relationships and the friendships that are developing between Aboriginal youth and the police on these canoe trips," said retired Abbotsford Police Department Inspector John Davidson, who has participated in Pulling Together since its inception. "We are learning and maturing in understanding, something that I believe is necessary for fostering healthy, safe communities for the future."

Half of the Province's funding is supporting the canoe journey; the remaining $15,000 will assist with developing a documentary film called "Pulling Together: A Sacred Journey". The documentary is a partnership between the Pulling Together Canoe Society, Ride With The Tide Productions and Capilano College. Production is expected to be completed by fall 2008.

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The Province is working with Aboriginal people to build a New Relationship and is committed to the Transformative Change Accord that includes revitalizing, preserving and promoting B.C.'s Aboriginal cultures and languages.

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Media contact:

Betty Nicholson
Ministry of Aboriginal Relations and Reconciliation
250 920-8532 (cell)

John Davidson
Pulling Together Canoe Tour
604 835-1115 (cell)

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